
SYNOPSIS

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By Leal Baird

Suspicious that someone in the Randolph Art Store, of Chicago, is responsible for the theft of his old masterpiece, Wayne Morgan attempts its recovery by taking the menial position of porter in the Store. He is disliked by Howard Mellon, the manager, who misses no opportunity to humiliate Morgan, especially in the presence of ~~Christine Randolph~~ the proprietor's ~~praiseworthy~~ daughter, Christine Randolph, who is too proud and haughty to even look at the porter.

It is the wish of Mark Randolph that his daughter wed the Earl of Tarsney, but Christine will not promise until after the copy she is making of an old masterpiece is passed upon by the Academy of Design. The Earl and Christine, Molly Winthrop and her brother Gale, attend the Bismark Cafe on a "slumming party." A habitue of the center of Chicago's night life is the Halstead Street Terror. This night the Terror's interest in Christine arouses the jealousy of Kitty, who attempts to stab him.

Thinking it part of the entertainment, the Earl's party encourages the "performers" with applause. Christine's smiling approval is mistaken by the Terror as an invitation, but before he reaches her table, Kitty stabs him in the back. In a passion of regret for the death of her lover, Kitty lunges at Christine and would have gouged Christine's arm with the broken neck of a bottle, but for the quick intervention of Morgan. Christine fainted, and when she came to she was held in a man's arms. As she looked into his eyes his lips met hers. Horrors! She had kissed the porter! Indignant, she withdrew herself and joined her party without a word of thanks for her rescuer.

Finally comes the day that means everything to Christine Randolph. The members of the Academy of Design, inspecting her painting, find it difficult to tell what, but Wayne Morgan, making a dramatic entrance, points out that the original has soul, while the copy is the work of one who lacks the true touch of the creative artist.

"By what right," thundered Randolph, "do you criticise my daughter's work?"

"By the right of one from whom that picture was stolen," replied Morgan, ~~for the masterpiece Christine had copied was the one stolen from~~
his mother!

Mellon ~~was~~ accuses Morgan of lying, but his bluff is called when Bill Cronk brings in Mellon's henchman, "Slim" Edwards, who confesses to stealing Morgan's picture, and other art works, on Mellon's orders. Both are arrested, and Randolph promotes Morgan to Mellon's position as manager.

Christine is furious! A nobody who sweeps her father's store has made havoc of her most cherished dream! A wholly feminine plan for revenge comes to her mind. Graciously she invites Morgan to her home. He goes-- it is the start of his undoing, for Christine, with smiles and beguiling feminine ways, encourages him to woo her.

His heart was at her feet on the day that she finally let him see the portrait he had posed for-- a hideous, spiteful portrait inspired by the bitterness of a spoiled, willful beauty. "That is why I tolerated you-- encouraged you---" she said.

"You may find you cannot make a mockery of love," he told her.

"A moment ago I loved you-- now I despise you."

"And I hate you," she flung at him as he left her-- left her to fall in a heap on the floor and realise that her hate had turned to love.

On Sunday, October 8, 1871, Chicago was gripped in the worst gale in its history. In the home of Molly Winthrop was a gathering of young people, among them Morgan and a chastened, adorable Christine,

asking and receiving forgiveness from a man whose love could forget all.

At the same time ~~xxxxxxxx~~ the arrival of a cousin from Ireland ^{is} ~~was~~ being celebrated in the house of Mrs. Leary, who kept a cow. Desiring milk for a rare punch, some of the party helped themselves to milk from the cow, which, annoyed at being disturbed, kicked over the lantern-- thus starting the blaze that, fed by the dry, ranshackle buildings of the poor section in which it started, and whipped by the ferocious gale, laid a great city in ashes.

Mark Randolph, attempting to save some of his art treasures, finds Mellon looting his store-- the jails had been emptied of their prisoners. Mellon decides to add Christine to his stolen treasures, but is prevented by Morgan, who, in a terrific fistic battle among the flames, knocks Mellon off a balcony to his death.

There follow days and nights of terror upon terror. Separated from each other in the pandemonium, Morgan searches for Christine in soup kitchens and bread lines-- and finds her, among the ruins, praying for him. In Christine's proud heart all barriers have been burned away and from the ashes has arisen a love to endure to the end.

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